News Releases - 2007

Alex Pauk, Paul Thagard win Canada Council for the Arts Molson Prizes for 2007

Ottawa, June 6, 2007 – Composer, conductor and music educator Alex Pauk and University of Waterloo philosophy professor Paul Thagard are the winners of this year's Canada Council for the Arts Molson Prizes.

Mr. Pauk, winner of the Molson Prize in the Arts, is one of Canada's most distinguished contemporary composers. In 1983, he founded Toronto's Esprit Orchestra, Canada's only orchestra devoted to new music. Dr. Thagard, winner of the Molson Prize in the Social Sciences and Humanities, is Canada's foremost scholar in the field of cognitive science, which brings together philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, computer science, linguistics and anthropology to study the mind and intelligence.

Two Molson Prizes, worth $50,000 each, are awarded every year to distinguished Canadians, one in the arts and the other in the social sciences or humanities. The prizes recognize the recipients' outstanding lifetime achievements and ongoing contributions to the cultural and intellectual life of Canada.

In selecting this year's recipients, the jury said:

"A passionate and visionary conductor, artistic director, composer and educator, Alex Pauk has demonstrated remarkable skills in the arts of initiative, risk-taking and the building and promotion of a leading Canadian arts organization, Esprit Orchestra, which is recognized around the world. A fervent believer in the richness and vitality of Canadian new music, he is a cutting-edge leader in the cultivation and presentation of contemporary music, in Canada and abroad. His true brilliance has emerged in the way that he has introduced new audiences – including young people and more traditional audiences for orchestral music – to the joys of exploring uncharted terrain, both musically and in the new and unusual venues where he has set his performances. Alex Pauk is a true champion of new music who continues to introduce Canadian and international composers to the world."

"Paul Thagard is one of Canada's most distinguished philosophers, whose virtually unparalleled work on the conceptual aspects of cognitive science and scientific reasoning has helped make University of Waterloo a magnet for top graduate students in these fields. His multi-disciplinary work and cross-disciplinary collaborations link several academic fields, including philosophy, psychology and artificial intelligence in the new discipline of cognitive science, a field which he co-founded. He has made major contributions and published widely in a number of fields and in the top publications and presses in the world. He is a true leader at the international level, a ground-breaking scholar and one of the most important thinkers of his generation."

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Established in 1964, the Molson Prizes are funded from the income of an endowment given to the Council by the Molson Foundation and now valued at more than $2.6 million. The Council administers these awards in cooperation with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and, following a nomination process, both laureates are selected by a joint peer jury. The winner of last year's Molson Prize in the Arts was writer Nicole Brossard. The Molson Prize in the Social Sciences and Humanities went to management professor Henry Mintzberg.

This year's Molson Prize jury was co-chaired by Carol Bream, Director of Public Affairs, Research and Communications at the Canada Council for the Arts and Patricia Dunne, Acting Vice-President, Programs at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The jury was made up of University of Manitoba English professor Diana Brydon (Winnipeg); York University English professor Christopher Innes (Toronto), Laval University management professor Réjean Landry, choreographer and director Brian Macdonald (Stratford, ON), photographer and University of Calgary art professor Arthur Nishimura (Calgary) and video artist Lisa Steele (Toronto).

The Molson Prize in the Arts will be presented to Alex Pauk at an Esprit Orchestra concert in the fall of 2007; the Molson Prize in the Social Sciences and Humanities will be presented at an event at the University of Waterloo, also this fall.

Biographical notes

Alex Pauk

Alex Pauk, composer, conductor and music educator, revitalized orchestral life for composers across Canada in 1983 by founding Esprit Orchestra as Canada's only orchestra devoted to new music. A graduate of the University of Toronto Faculty of Music, he moved to Vancouver in 1973 and established the new music group Days Months and Years to Come. After further studies in Japan and Europe, he made Toronto his base and founded Esprit Orchestra, where he still serves as music director and conductor. In that capacity, he has provided opportunities for choreographers and dancers, stage and lighting designers, actors and directors and media and visual artists to combine their talents with Esprit in adventurous cross-disciplinary projects.

Mr. Pauk has a wide range of experience as a composer with works for every kind of performing ensemble, film and television, the theatre as well as dance companies. His most notable compositions of recent years include *Touch Piece*, a multimedia work for full orchestra and a digital sound track, performed in a multi-screen video environment; *Farewell to Heaven*, a full-length work for the Menaka Thakkar Indian Dance Company (blending Southeast Asian musical elements with Western orchestral sounds), and three works involving important Canadian musicians: *Concerto for Harp and Orchestra* (Erica Goodman – harp);

Concerto for Two Pianos and Orchestra (Duo Turgeon – pianos); and *Flute Quintet* (Robert Aitken – flute). As co-composer of the score for the dance film *Roxana*, he received the 2007 Golden Sheaf Award (Best Original Music - Fiction) at the Yorkton Short Film and Video Festival.

Paul Thagard

Paul Thagard is a Professor of Philosophy at the University of Waterloo and director of the university's interdisciplinary Cognitive Science program. Born in Yorkton, Saskatchewan, he holds degrees from the University of Saskatchewan, Cambridge University, University of Toronto and the University of Michigan. Dr. Thagard has held appointments at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and Princeton University and has been teaching at the University of Waterloo since 1992, where he received a University of Waterloo Award for Excellence in Research (2003) and was appointed University Research Chair (2005). In 2006, Dr. Thagard was made a fellow of the Cognitive Science Society, only the second Canadian resident to receive that honour.

Dr. Thagard is author or co-author of eight books and editor or co-editor of three others. He also has close to 200 other publications, including ones in leading journals in philosophy, psychology, artificial intelligence and cognitive science. He has given presentations at more than 100 conferences and universities and his work has been translated into Polish, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Czech, German, Japanese and Chinese. In 1992, his book, *Conceptual Revolutions,* was named the Outstanding Book in Psychology at the Association of American Publishers' professional and scholarly book awards.

General information

The Canada Council for the Arts, in addition to its principal role of promoting and fostering the arts in Canada, administers and awards prizes and fellowships to over 100 artists and scholars annually in the arts, humanities, social sciences, natural and health sciences, and engineering. Among these are the Killam Prizes, the Killam Research Fellowships, the Governor General's Literary Awards, the Governor General's Awards in Visual and Media Arts and the Walter Carsen Prize for Excellence in the Performing Arts.

For more information about these awards, including nomination procedures, contact Janet Riedel Pigott, Acting Director of Endowments and Prizes, at 613-566-4414, or 1-800-263-5588, ext. 5041; or Danielle Sarault, Acting Program Officer, Endowments and Prizes, at 613 566 4414, or 1-800-263-5588, ext. 4116.

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